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COALITION FOR TRANSPORTATION PRODUCTIVITY STATEMENT RESPONDING TO TRUCK SAFETY COALITION EFFORTS TO FREEZE VEHICLE WEIGHT LIMITS

John Runyan, Executive Director of the Coalition for Transportation Productivity (CTP), released the following statement:

“CTP and the Truck Safety Coalition share a dedication to making roads safer for both motorists and truckers. Our hearts go out to accident victims and their families. Nothing can ever ease their pain. But the Truck Safety Coalition's proposal to freeze truck weight limits and eliminate the ability of state DOTs to maximize the productivity of their state road networks would block important improvements to highway safety and jeopardize economic productivity.

“The Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (SHIPA) is a well-intentioned, yet counterproductive, proposal that would have significant negative consequences for our transportation network. SHIPA takes away each state’s ability to set weight limits according to local safety factors, and is built on the flawed logic that truck weight increases, not economic growth, drive demand for more trucks. With the U.S. trucking industry projected to haul 30 percent more tonnage in 2021 than it does today, SHIPA would lead to a dramatic increase in the number of trucks on the road—jeopardizing highway safety, the environment and the economy.

“The fixation on impeding truck weight regulation is misguided. The reality is that most highway tragedies involving trucks are related to compliance issues that have absolutely nothing to do with vehicle weight. In fact, the Federal Highway Administration just released statistics demonstrating that trucking is safer than ever. The number of injuries in U.S. truck-related accidents and truck-involved fatalities both declined substantially in 2009—making it the safest year since the federal government began keeping such records in 1975.

“Now is the time to modernize the federal weight limit—not turn back the clock. The 30-year-old limit forces many trucks to travel with wasted space in their trailers. Such inefficiency puts more trucks on the road and wastes fuel. We are asking Congress to address this issue now in order to encourage economic recovery, and make roads safer as our country grows.

“The Safe and Efficient Transportation Act, known as ‘SETA’ will minimize truckloads and vehicles miles in order to save lives. SETA is a narrowly drawn bill giving each state the option to raise weight limits on interstate highways, but only for trucks equipped with a sixth axle. The six-axle trucks SETA proposes are not bigger or larger in any way.

“SETA enables companies to move a given amount of product in fewer vehicles, without adding more weight per tire or increasing stopping distances. U.S. DOT and Transportation Research Board studies confirm that the sixth axle maintains—or even improves—all braking and handling characteristics for 97,000-pound trucks.

“A growing body of academic, state, federal and international data supports SETA. The U.S. federal weight limit trails all other developed countries, and higher productivity, six-axle trucks are already in use around the globe. In 2001, The United Kingdom enacted a proposal like SETA, raising its gross vehicle weight limit for six-axle trucks to 97,000 pounds. Since then, the total tonnage shipped has increased while the vehicle miles traveled to deliver those goods has leveled off. Most importantly, fatal truck-related accident rates have declined substantially

“State departments of transportation across the country support SETA’s enactment. Based on the findings of a 2009 Wisconsin DOT study, a law like SETA would have prevented 90 truck-related accidents in the state during 2006. Last year, Maine and Vermont conducted pilot programs opening their interstates to higher productivity, six-axle vehicles. State transportation officials, law enforcement, truckers and motorists all agree that the pilots made highways safer, greener and more efficient.

“A national poll commissioned in 2009 by CTP demonstrates that a majority of Americans are in favor of responsible truck weight reform as outlined in SETA. When Americans understand that SETA simply raises interstate weight limits for properly equipped trucks, without making vehicles any larger, they solidly support the proposal as a means to make roads safer, reduce our carbon footprint and strengthen the economy.

“Now is the time to follow the facts. Congress should enact SETA to carry American truck transportation into the 21st century.”

About the Coalition for Transportation Productivity

The Coalition for Transportation Productivity (CTP) is a coalition of more than 180 shippers and allied associations dedicated to addressing the safety, economic and environmental challenges facing our nation’s freight transportation network through carefully crafted truck weight reform. For more information, visit www.transportationproductivity.org.

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